

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
DEPARTMENT OF CONSUMER & REGULATORY AFFAIRS



April 29, 2009

Dear Towing Lot Operator:

The D.C. Department of Consumer and Regulatory Affairs (DCRA) has issued final regulations governing the operations of towing service storage lots in the District of Columbia. These new regulations (D.C. Municipal Regulations, Title 16, Section 405.8), may require substantial changes to how you do business. A copy of the new regulations is enclosed with this letter.

The new regulations are intended to prevent towing lots in the District of Columbia from being operated or maintained in ways that can endanger or inconvenience customers, detract from the attractiveness of District neighborhoods, or threaten harm to the environment. The regulations were first published in the D.C. Register as a proposed rulemaking on March 6, 2009, and were republished in the D.C. Register as a final and effective rulemaking on April 24, 2009 (56 DCR 3093).

Under the new regulations, towing service storage lots may be used to store vehicles following either public tows or tows for customers, except that vehicles towed for customers may not be stored for more than sixty days. In addition to using the lots to store towed vehicles, the lot operators may provide parking for vehicles belonging to customers, employees, and other daily visitors, as well as parking for vehicles, such as tow trucks, that are regularly used by the towing business. But no other vehicles, including vehicles the lot operators have acquired and intend to restore, may be kept on the lot.

The regulations also establish new requirements for operating towing service storage lots. Each lot must be served by an office with heating, electricity, and a bathroom. There are also new requirements for paving of parking areas, marking of parking spaces, signage, curbing or fencing, and screening of lots from adjacent residential zones. Towing service storage lots not located in C-M or M zones must also be screened on all sides by opaque fencing, walls, evergreen hedges, or evergreen trees. Finally, no vehicle parts or trash may be stored outdoors on the lots unless stored off the ground in secured containers.

DCRA will enforce the new regulations in stages. In stage one, which ends May 31, 2009, DCRA will educate operators and the public about the new regulations and encourage voluntary compliance. In stage two, which begins June 1, 2009, and ends June 30, 2009, DCRA will enforce the new restrictions on the permissible purposes for which vehicles may be stored or parked on towing lots, the new 60-day restriction on storing vehicles that have been towed for customers, and the requirement that vehicle parts and trash be properly stored. In stage three, which begins July 1, 2009, DCRA will enforce the remainder of the new regulations, but not against operators who have applied to

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DCRA for permits to make improvements that would correct their violations, such as building permits needed to construct an office with heating, electricity, and a bathroom. In stage four, which begins September 1, 2009, DCRA will begin enforcing against all violations of the new regulations.

Operators who are unable to apply for necessary permits by July 1, 2009, or who are unable to come into full compliance by September 1, 2009, may request extensions of time, which DCRA will grant only for good cause shown. Requests for extensions of time should be sent to Juva Hepburn, Acting Program Manager of the Business License Division.

For help with questions about what permits you may need, you may visit our web-site at www.dcra.dc.gov and click on "Building Permits."

Sincerely,

Juva Hepburn

Acting Program Manager
Business License Division

Enclosure:
Notice of Final Rulemaking (Title 16, new Section 405.8)